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First position effect on the emotional response of consumers: A case study in chocolate and beers

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Emotional response to food has been proven to provide useful information about consumer experience in new product development. Methods to support the measurement of consumers' emotional response to products have been called for. The aim of this study is to analyse the first position effect on the emotional response elicited by food products. It is hypothesised that the sample evaluated first may have higher scores in positive emotions and lower in negative ones, regardless of the product.

Two different kinds of products, chocolate and beer, were tasted in different studies during 2010 and 2013 in Madrid by 84 consumers and 108 consumers respectively. In the chocolate study, two unlabelled milk chocolate pieces were presented in a randomized balanced order. In the beers study, four different Spanish commercial beers were tasted by the consumers; two of them being also served in duplicate in the first position as a warm-up sample. The consumers rated firstly the overall liking, and then described their feelings using a Spanish translation of the EsSense Profile¹. The effect of the product and its position was studied by appropriate statistical tests.

In the case of chocolate, an effect of position was found for overall liking and for 7 emotion terms from the list. In the beer study, a significant effect of position in overall liking and 9 emotions were found.

This study shows that when product differences are slight the first position effect must be taken into consideration when designing the experiment and analysing the data. It is proposed to use a warm-up sample to avoid the bias due to the first position effect when analysing the emotional response of consumers.

References

1. King SC and Meiselman HL (2010) Development of a method to measure consumer emotions associated with foods. *Food Quality and Preference* 21: 168–177.

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